

Department of Human Services

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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips Friday, May 25, 2007

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Cost-cutting to close three state assistance offices in Wayne County

May 24, 2007

FREE PRESS STAFF

The Michigan Department of Human Services announced Thursday that three state public assistance offices in Wayne County will close by the end of June as a cost-cutting measure.

No staff reductions are planned as a result of the closings, state Human Services Director Marianne Udow said, and clients served by those offices will be reassigned.

The department's Tireman District office will close May 25 and the office located in the Dexter Elmhurst Community Center will close May 31. The center itself will not close and other tenants will continue to operate there.

The Hamtramck District office will close June 29. Leases on the space where the Tireman and Hamtramck offices are located are expiring. Public assistance clients served by those two offices will be reassigned to other Wayne County districts, but can continue to use the same phone numbers to contact their caseworkers until the transition is complete.

Cases from Tireman will be reassigned to the Wayne County Grand River-Warren, Schoolcraft and Lafayette district offices. Cases from Hamtramck will be reassigned to the Medbury, Gratiot-7 Mile and McNichols district offices. Those affected will receive letters telling them where their cases are assigned and providing them with contact information for their DHS specialists.

The DHS office in the Dexter Elmhurst center provides no direct client services, and the closings do not affect any children's protective services, adoption, foster care or related adult services.

"We will do everything possible to minimize the disruption for our clients, staff and Wayne County partners," Udow said in a prepared statement. "In most cases, clients will continue to have the same caseworker."

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Detroit Free Press Wayne County news briefs

May 25, 2007

COUNTY-WIDE: Public assistance offices to close

The Michigan Department of Human Services announced Thursday that three state public assistance offices in Wayne County will close by the end of June as a cost-cutting measure.

No staff reductions are planned as a result of the closings, state Human Services Director Marianne Udow said.

The Tireman District office will close today, and the office inside the Dexter Elmhurst Community Center is to close May 31. The Hamtramck District office is expected to close June 29.

Cases from Tireman will be reassigned to the Wayne County Grand River-Warren, Schoolcraft and Lafayette district offices. Cases from Hamtramck will be reassigned to the Medbury, Gratiot-7 Mile and McNichols district offices.

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May 24, 2007

State to close three Wayne County welfare offices

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

DETROIT-- The Michigan Department of Human Services will close three Wayne County offices in May and June, welfare officials said today. The Social Services district office on Tireman will be shuttered Friday to save money and the Hamtramck office will close June 29, said state DHS Director Marianne Udow.

A third office at the Dexter Elmhurst Community Center, which does not provide services directly to clients, will be close May 31.

The leases have expired on the buildings, and they will not be renewed. The department is trying to save money by consolidating offices, Udow said in a press release.

People who receive their public assistance payments through those neighborhood offices will be directed to other locations in the city, according to Udow. The state will take steps to minimize disruption for people affected by the changes, she said. Most clients will continue to be assigned to the same worker, and will use the same phone numbers to contact DHS. There will be no overall reduction in number of DHS employees assigned to the area, she said.

You can reach Karen Bouffard at (734) 462-2206 or kbouffard@detnews.com.

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Friday, May 25, 2007

Wayne Briefs

Iveory Perkins / The Detroit News

Countywide: Welfare offices to close

The Michigan Department of Human Services will close three Wayne County offices in May and June as a cost-cutting measure, welfare officials said Thursday. The Social Services district office on Tireman will be shuttered today. The Hamtramck office will close June 29. A third office at the Dexter Elmhurst Community Center will close Thursday. All of the clients will be shifted to other Detroit offices and will retain their human services workers, according to department spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet. According to Sorbet, each office closed will save the state \$300,000-\$350,000.

DHS To Close Three Wayne County Offices

MIRS, May 24, 2007

The Department of Human Services (DHS) will close three Wayne County offices in May and June as a way to cut an estimated \$800,000 over the course of a year.

The DHS office inside the Dexter Elmhurst Community Center will close May 31. The Tireman District office will close May 25 and the Hamtramck District office will close June 29. The leases on the latter two buildings are expiring and merging the operations from the two buildings to nearby offices saves state money, said DHS Director Marianne **UDOW**.

"We will do everything possible to minimize the disruption for our clients, staff and Wayne County partners," Udow said. "In most cases, clients will continue to have the same caseworker and there will be no staff reductions as a result of this action."

DHS officials did not have an immediate estimate on how much the department would save through the move, which comes after DHS closed two other Wayne County offices in the last couple of years. Overall, five DHS offices have closed in the last five years.

On March 31, 2006, DHS closed its Wayne County District Office in Lincoln Park, reassigning those cases to the Fort Wayne District Office on West Jefferson. Six months earlier, the Fullerton District Office in Wayne County closed, with the staff being shifted to offices at Grand River/Warren and Tireman Districts.

DHS Spokesman Maureen **SORBET** said the DHS routinely looks at office consolidation solutions across the state, and the office isn't particularly targeting Detroit or Wayne County with its consolidations.

The DHS office in the Dexter Elmhurst center provided no direct client services. Public assistance cases served through the Tireman office will be reassigned to the Wayne County Grand River-Warren, Schoolcraft and Lafayette district offices. Cases from Hamtramck will be reassigned to the Medbury, Gratiot-7 Mile and McNichols district offices.

None of the offices slated to close provide children's protective services, adoption, foster care or related adult services.

Kalamazoo Gazette

May 25, 2007

Mom pleads guilty to child abuse She let men have sex with her daughter, 14.

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SHELBY TOWNSHIP — A Macomb County woman who authorities say allowed two men to have sex with her 14-year-old daughter, who has been pregnant three times, pleaded guilty to child abuse in the case.

The 35-year-old entered the plea Thursday in District Court in Shelby Township and was sentenced to two years' probation and a \$500 fine. Her name was not being used to protect the identity of her daughter, who is in foster care.

Two men also were charged in the case. Police said the girl was pregnant by one of the men twice, but had two miscarriages. Last month, when charges were announced, police said she was pregnant again.

The girl made headlines about two years ago after fleeing to Indiana with a man she met on MySpace.com. The man told police he thought the girl was 18.

-- Associated Press

Friday, May 25, 2007

Detroit News Macomb Briefs

Shelby Twp.: Mom guilty of child abuse

A 35-year-old mother who had her own MySpace site in which she called herself "Tammy Tokes" and bragged about her partying lifestyle pleaded guilty Thursday in 41-A District Court to fourth-degree child abuse for allowing her 14-year-old daughter to have sex with two men, and to become pregnant. Tammy Fennell was sentenced by Judge Douglas Shepherd to two years' probation and a \$500 fine. Fennell will be allowed to have supervised visits with her daughter, who is in foster care. She originally was charged with second-degree child abuse, but prosecutors allowed her to plead to the lesser charge because it was unclear whether pregnancy could be considered abuse. The girl miscarried one pregnancy and is now pregnant again.

Chesterfield Twp.: Cop waives exam

A Michigan State Police sergeant charged with using the Internet to solicit a minor and send explicit material to a minor waived his preliminary exam in 42-2 District Court Thursday and will stand trial. Sgt. Kevin Hardoin, 45, of Chesterfield Township was arrested in March after he allegedly chatted online with what he thought were 13- and 14-year-old girls who were actually undercover agents for the state Attorney General's Office.



Man who wrapped daughter loses appeal

Friday, May 25, 2007

By Steven Hepker

shepker@citpat.com -- 768-4923

Saran Wrap is OK for meat but not for wrapping teenage girls, the Michigan Court of Appeals ruled this week in a Jackson County appeal.

The court agreed with a 2005 jury verdict that it was cruel for Henry V. Lott to wrap his 16-year-old daughter, Amanda, in cellophane from head to toe.

Lott was sentenced to 30 days in jail and placed on probation for five years for second-degree child abuse.

The jury acquitted Lott of more serious charges of attempted murder, heroin possession and domestic violence.

Prosecutors alleged Lott of Rives Junction tried to suffocate his daughter because he blamed her for breaking up his marriage and did not want to pay more child support for her.

Lott said he wrapped his daughter in Saran Wrap in April 2005 to sweat out a fever, although the girl testified she was not sick.

The case hinged on the drug charge. Investigators alleged Lott planned to inject the girl with a fatal dose of heroin after he subdued her in plastic wrap. The jury deliberated nine hours and said the heroin charge was not proved, and so there was no plan to kill her.

Testimony indicated the girl passed out after Lott wrapped her and placed a pillow over her face.

Even if the jury believed the cellophane was to reduce her fever, it still could reasonably conclude the act was cruel, the appeals court said.

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People who care

To the editor:

May is designated National Foster Care Month — a time when the spotlight shines on the children and teens, the foster families, and the dedicated child welfare professionals who make foster care work. The foster care “system” is only as good as the people who choose to be a part of it. As more Americans begin to feel responsible for children who are in foster care, the system will become better and better.

In an ideal world, every child would have a family who loved them and provided for their every need. Unfortunately, we do not live in an ideal world. There are over 18, 500 children in foster care in Michigan. Most of these children come into foster care because of neglect or abuse. Foster care families provide a safe, stable, and supportive home for these children until they can be returned to their parents or if that is not possible, are adopted into permanent homes.

Though the goal is for children to remain, or be returned to their parents, safety concerns often mean separation is necessary. When children must be removed, those in the Department of Human Services interested in the child’s welfare work toward keeping children with siblings and relatives and in their community. In our three-county area there is a need for foster families who can take in sibling groups, special needs children and older youth.

Being a foster parent is not the only way to have an impact on the life of a child in foster care. You can become a volunteer or support a foster youth in college and vocational school. You can offer a teenager job training or a job, a place to stay, a computer or mentoring. Get involved: No child should lose relationships in the community in addition to being removed from the home. Call the Baraga County FIA, 353-4700, Houghton and Keweenaw County FIA, 482-0500 to see what you can do. Consider sending some thank you cards, coupons for free pizza, or new toys to the agency for distribution to foster families and the children they care for. Call Foster Family Support Services of Houghton and Baraga counties, 487-9832 for more information. National Foster Care Month is an opportunity to change the perception that children in foster care are the responsibility of someone else. They are our children; their well-being is dependent on the willingness of our entire community to care for and about them.

LINDA SANCHEZ

Foster Family Support Services

A program of the Good Will Farm

Hancock

May 25, 2007

Clinton Revisits Health Care and Affordability

By [KATHARINE Q. SEELYE](#)

Senator [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#), who endured a major political setback as first lady when she tried to promote universal health care, revived that crusade yesterday but in a more measured way, offering a plan to reduce costs, through programs like disease prevention, to make universal coverage affordable.

Mrs. Clinton, who is seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, said she would cut health care spending by \$120 billion a year through prevention programs, coordinated treatment of chronic diseases and computerized record keeping.

In addition, she said she would reduce costs by allowing imports of cheaper drugs, more use of generic drugs and by having the government negotiate the prices of drugs covered under Medicare.

In a speech at [George Washington University](#) in Washington, Mrs. Clinton said the health care system was broken and her mission as president would be to fix it.

She attributed the rise in costs to increases in [obesity](#) and in diseases like [diabetes](#), [asthma](#) and [heart disease](#) that she said could be combated by focusing on preventive efforts.

She also blamed the insurance industry, saying that it spent billions of dollars a year trying to figure out how not to cover people who have expensive, pre-existing conditions. She would allow anyone to join a plan, lowering costs by spreading the risk among larger pools of patients.

“As president, I will end the practice of insurance company cherry-picking once and for all by allowing anyone who wants to join a plan to do so and prohibiting insurance companies from carving out benefits or charging higher rates to people with health problems,” Mrs. Clinton said.

Her address came as her main opponent in the Democratic field, Senator [Barack Obama](#) of Illinois, is preparing to address health care costs on Tuesday in a speech in Iowa. Former Senator [John Edwards](#) of North Carolina, also a candidate, proposed a comprehensive plan earlier this year. Both would pay for providing universal coverage by repealing President Bush’s tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.

Mrs. Clinton’s plan has three parts: lowering costs, improving quality and insuring everyone. Her speech yesterday focused on lowering costs as a way to help pay for health insurance for the 45 million Americans who have none.

Her plan includes a “Best Practices Institute,” created with both public and private money, to examine whether new technologies and new drugs are actually better for patients or just bring in more profits.

So-called blockbuster drugs, for example, she said, are not necessarily more effective than “old standbys,” just because they are

promoted with advertising that shows “people running through fields of wildflowers.”

Drew Altman, president of the Kaiser Foundation, said he was intrigued by Mrs. Clinton’s call for a Best Practices Institute. By demonstrating what techniques and which drugs worked best, Mr. Altman said, such an organization could significantly control costs.

Mohit Ghose, a spokesman for America’s Health Insurance Plans, which represents the insurance industry, said the industry supported many of Mrs. Clinton’s goals.

“We agree that universal access is a goal of even our proposal,” Mr. Ghose said. “But it’s a question of how we get there, and how we make sure we’re providing access to as many people as possible while preserving the affordability.”

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The Daily Telegram

[Print Page](#)**FRIDAY MAY 25, 2007** Last modified: *Thursday, May 24, 2007 3:47 PM EDT*

Teen faces felony charge in school threat case

Richard Perry is the second Clinton High School student to be prosecuted for writing threats in high school bathrooms.

From staff reports

ADRIAN — A 17-year-old Clinton High School student accused of writing a threat on a bathroom wall was arraigned on a false terrorism threat felony charge carrying a maximum 20-year prison term Wednesday in Lenawee County District Court.

Richard Brian Perry is the second Clinton student to be prosecuted for writing threats in high school bathrooms. Clinton Police Chief Michael Randolph said he hopes it will help students understand how unsafe are threats of school violence.

"We need to send a message how serious this is," Randolph said. Even if intended as a prank, he said, school threats require an enormous amount of resources to investigate and they create a great deal of anxiety in the community.

Perry was released on a personal recognizance bond after his arraignment before Judge James E. Sheridan. A preliminary examination was scheduled for June 4 to determine if there is sufficient evidence against Perry in the May 11 incident.

Perry was also expelled from Clinton High School on Monday for 90 days at a school board meeting where a 15-year-old girl received a 180-day expulsion for a similar incident. She has already gone through a juvenile court prosecution, said Randolph. The girl admitted she wrote a threat on April 19 saying there would be a shooting "worse than V-Tech," a reference to the mass killing at Virginia Tech University.

The girl reported the message to school officials, setting off a school lockdown and search of buildings by Lenawee County sheriff's deputies and officers from the Clinton, Tecumseh and Adrian police departments.

A message found May 11 in a boy's bathroom after the end of classes that Friday did not cause as much disruption, Randolph said. Interviews with students quickly led to Perry, who Randolph said confessed.

"He said he wrote it as a joke to get a reaction from his friends, but he forgot to erase it," Randolph said.

Court prosecutions will not only provide punishments to discourage others but will allow police departments to seek restitution payments for the efforts put into the investigations of the two threats, Randolph said.

[-- CLOSE WINDOW --](#)

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Article published May 25, 2007

Not all dads are deadbeat; some moms share blame, too

In response to Tammi Steinert's letter against deadbeat dads, some of us pay every week. Some of us have paid thousands of dollars above and beyond due to Friend of the Court errors that took years to correct. Some of us paid when we were out of work for weeks at a time.

Some of us paid when we had letters from our employers that all overtime was revoked. When taking paychecks and letters to the FOC, we are told that's not what our W2 says. Try living on what is left after the FOC computes your income at that level when almost half goes away.

Some of us have had to pay "daycare" expenses for our ex-wives' live-in boyfriends. Yet, all we ever hear about are deadbeat dads.

Numerous moms prevent any meaningful relationships with the kids. In the end the kids are the only ones hurt. One day they will understand and pity the moms when they do.

MARK LEVIS

St. Clair, May 23



Marriage counts

Area leaders can't stay silent about out-of-wedlock births

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, May 25, 2007

A recent Kids Count in Michigan report should provoke some leading voices to confront a social custom that ensures poverty, underachievement and crime - even though few dare to even name it. That is the destructive prevalence of persistently flouting marriage and having children out of wedlock.

Kids Count assesses that 46 percent of babies born in Genesee County in 2003-05 were to unwed mothers, which is just a modicum lower than the 48 percent of 10 years ago. Whatever slight encouragement might be gleaned from that decrease is mitigated by the distressing statistic that one in 10 babies born in this county weighs less than 5 1/2 pounds. Low birth weight often slows both physical and intellectual growth and maturation, even though it can be largely avoided by responsible prenatal care and healthy habits.

An even more astounding view of births here is offered by local social researcher Robin Widgery, who assessed in 2004 that seven of 10 children born to mothers inside Flint were out of wedlock. Should anyone be surprised then at the degree of poverty in the city, as well as visibly poor parenting?

Mothers left to fend for themselves are usually too overwhelmed to be both inspirer and disciplinarian to their children, which helps explain why so many children are given to the care of aging grandparents. Those are the lucky ones.

Our leaders, religious and others, need to overcome their intimidation at even mentioning this pernicious phenomenon, and begin to not only speak out against it forcefully, but encourage and reward those who create intact, attentive and loving families.

Too many are quick to decry poverty, crime, poor schools and lack of employment opportunity, then by implication encourage a continuance by pretending not to notice a primary cause.

It needs to be stated often and forcefully that men who would father children need first to make a life commitment to their children's mother and prepare to become a constant presence in their children's lives, rather than a mere biological progenitor. Those who think and act otherwise are of deficient character at best, and when they father children with underaged mothers, should be prosecuted as sexual assailants.

This is a tough order perhaps, but mild and kindly compared to the alternative of standing pat, waiting for the next Kids Count report, all the while knowing that by doing nothing there can only be more of the same bad news.

QUICK TAKE

Tough start in life

Genesee County had one of the highest rates of low-birth weight babies in the state. About one in 10 babies born here weigh less than 5 1/2 pounds at birth.

The rate of unmarried moms continues to be high: 46 percent of all births.

Source: Kids Count in Michigan report

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ACC, Michigan Works team up to help workers



News Photo by Phil Wenzel

AHS building trades teacher Jason Loyer, on the ladder, supervises some of his advanced students as they work on a deer blind they are building for Habitat for Humanity at the ReStore north of Alpena. Loyer said the blind will take about three days to build and they are using materials donated by The Home Depot, Advanced Truss and American Craftsman. Habitat for Humanity plans to raffle off the blind at the ReStore in October.

By PHIL WENZEL

Members of the Michigan Works office in Alpena have teamed with Alpena Community College to lend a hand to the former employees of Thunder Bay Manufacturing.

Michigan Works officials said they have met with members of both Thunder Bay management and the United Auto Workers Local 318, the plant's union. They called their initial meeting part of a "rapid response" to the plant's closure, which occurred earlier this month.

Mark McConnell, a case manager with Michigan Works, said the meetings were intended to let the displaced workers know what sort of options they have for the future and how Michigan Works can help them. He said similar meetings could take place in the future.

Michigan Works trainer Chris Coultres said the office always has an open door policy, and its services are free.

"We would welcome all the people from Thunder Bay Manufacturing," Coultres said.

The amount of help the workers can receive will depend on whether or not they qualify for the Trade Act, a federal program that provides money and other services for recently unemployed people. To qualify, their company needs to prove that it lost sales due to foreign competition.

Thunder Bay applied for trade status recently and should know within 45 days whether it qualifies.

"If the funding is available, the trade act qualifies as one of the Cadillac of programs," McConnell said.

If trade status is granted, Michigan Works will hold more sessions with Thunder Bay Manufacturing workers to tell them how they may use its services. Those include a possible extension of unemployment benefits and funding for college or on-the-job training.

Mike Kollien, admissions director for ACC, said he met with the Thunder Bay employees at the same time Michigan Works did. He provided them with information on applying to ACC and the programs it offers. He said it is the college's goal to help them remain in the area.

"Really what we're trying to do here is promote community growth and opportunities for our community members," Kollien said.

Coultes said her office works frequently with ACC, so joining forces to help the Thunder Bay employees is a natural fit. However, she also cautioned that college training may not be the best course for some of them.

She said Michigan Works typically prefers to find a job for unemployed people as quickly as possible, and schooling can slow that down.

Michigan Works has held a variety of workshops and is planning more, Coultes said. Staff members hope to teach the workers ways to use the Michigan Talent Bank and other online job-seeking sources. They also will be going over resume building and interview skills.

Even without the Trade Act, Thunder Bay workers still may be eligible for help from the Work Force Investment Act, a state and federal program that Coultes said they should qualify for. It can help them with job searches and on-the-job training.

Other organizations that have met with the workers include the Department of Human Services and the Alpena Area Chamber of Commerce.

"It was a collection of people saying 'We are here, give us a call,'" Kollien said.

Phil Wenzel can be reached via e-mail at pwenzel@thealpenanews.com or by phone at 358-5689.

May 25, 2007

Congress Passes Increase in the Minimum Wage

By [STEPHEN LABATON](#)

WASHINGTON, May 24 — Congress handed a major victory to low-income workers on Thursday night by approving the first increase in the federal minimum wage rate in a decade.

By a vote of 348 to 73, the House approved the measure as part of a deal on Iraq spending. Less than two hours later, the wage increase was approved in the Senate, where it was combined with a bill providing more money for the Iraq war. That vote was 80 to 14.

The measure would raise the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour from \$5.15 in three stages over two years. The bill includes \$4.84 billion in tax breaks for small businesses. They have made a case, supported by [Republicans](#) and the White House, that the wage increase would be a burden for them.

President Bush said he would sign the measure as part of the bigger spending package that had been negotiated between Democratic lawmakers and the administration.

After the bill is signed, the wage increase will become the first item in the “Six for ‘06” agenda of the new Congressional Democratic leadership to become law.

Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#), Democrat of California, said the increase was overdue.

“After 10 years of indifference,” Ms. Pelosi said, “we are raising wages for the hardest-working Americans.”

The House and Senate approved the increase months ago in different packages, but it stalled over disagreements about the tax breaks. Republicans had sought larger tax breaks for businesses.

The minimum wage was an important sweetener for Democrats in dealing with the larger package, which includes money for the military in Iraq and Afghanistan and which had been delayed by a partisan battle over imposing a timetable to reduce troop levels in Iraq.

Although more than half the states have higher minimum wages than the existing federal rate, the Economic Policy Institute, a liberal research group, estimates that 4 percent of the work force, or 5.6 million workers, earns less than \$7.25 an hour.

President [Bill Clinton](#) signed the last increase in 1997. Seven states now have minimum wages higher than \$7.25 an hour.

A number of business interests lobbied strongly against the increase. One group, the National Restaurant Association, said the last increase led to a reduction of 146,000 jobs in the industry and prompted owners to postpone plans to hire an additional 106,000 workers.

The House debate over the wage was limited, as most lawmakers spent their floor time arguing over Iraq spending.

Representative [John A. Boehner](#), Republican of Ohio and the House minority leader, criticized the wage provision along with a set of domestic spending measures attached to what was viewed as “must pass legislation.”

“We’ve got a host of issues that don’t deserve to be put on the backs of the military,” Mr. Boehner said. “It’s a sneaky way to do business.”

Democrats countered that Congress had waited too long and that many workers had suffered because of the lower rate.

“Wages have been unconscionably frozen for the last decade” said Representative David R. Obey, Democrat of Wisconsin and chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

Representative George Miller, Democrat of California and chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, estimated that in the first year that the full increase would take effect, it would provide a family of three with money to buy an additional 15 months of groceries.

In addition to the tax breaks, the Iraq spending bill had benefits for businesses. Major airline carriers, for example, successfully lobbied for a provision to relieve them of some pension liabilities.

The [National Association of Manufacturers](#) succeeded in having a provision stricken that would have blocked federal officials from lowering tougher state safety standards for chemical plants.

The bill includes \$6.3 billion more for areas damaged by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, \$600 million for health insurance for children in low-income families and \$3 billion for aid in farm disasters.

The White House had opposed many of the domestic spending provisions, which totaled \$22 billion. Republicans managed to remove some of them shortly before the bill reached the floor, including \$660 million to stockpile medicine for a flu pandemic and \$400 million for energy assistance for low-income families.

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— THE — ANN ARBOR NEWS

HelpSource stuns with closure announcement

Human services agency to end programs Sept. 30

Friday, May 25, 2007

BY SUSAN L. OPPAT

News Staff Reporter

Washtenaw County's largest nongovernmental social service agency announced Thursday that it will close its doors Sept. 30, putting 600 clients - from abused and neglected children to senior citizens - at risk of losing the assistance on which they depend.

Board members decided that HelpSource no longer can afford to provide the services its clients deserve, president David Christensen said.

The decision comes weeks after Washtenaw United Way announced it would cut the agency's allocation 25 percent, from \$415,287 to \$311,422. HelpSource was given more United Way money than any other agency.

Christensen and HelpSource director Susan Crabb refused Thursday to lay the blame for the closure on the United Way.

"There isn't any one straw that broke the camel's back," Christensen said. "It's the economy, a 2-ton weight that has strained everything to the breaking point."

He said the agency averted a \$100,000 deficit last year, but projected a \$350,000 to \$400,000 deficit this year.

"If we were to keep flying this airplane, it would be with one wing, and we would be sure to hit the ground. A crash-and-burn is not the right thing to do for the people we serve," he said.

Instead, he said, the agency will help its clients - who include mentally impaired senior citizens, pregnant teens and people who can't afford needed mental health services - find other programs.

That won't be easy, he said, because area nonprofits already have eliminated many duplicate services.

He said programs will begin to close by July. But one program, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, will try to make it on its own. The program matches volunteers with children who need adult mentors.

Christensen said the HelpSource board tried to come up with a way to eliminate some programs and save others. But HelpSource worked, he said, because it spread the cost of a single administration over all 12 HelpSource programs. He said HelpSource couldn't cut administration any further because the staff hasn't seen a raise since 1996.

"I hope we're not the first in a series" of nonprofit closures, he added.

But Joan Chesler, executive director of The Corner Health Center in Ypsilanti, fears that may be just what it is.

The center provides health care for foster and group home children served by HelpSource, and for pregnant teens.

"This is just completely frightening," Chesler said.

"They are a well-managed, well-respected provider of very important services to the young people we serve. If they can't make it, what's going to happen to the smaller agencies?" she asked.

Sandra Rupp, executive director of Washtenaw United Way, said she was stunned by the announcement and has offered HelpSource "full assistance" while the agency tries to place clients in other programs. She said she asked for a meeting with agency officials to "go through the process of understanding all of this."

HelpSource was created in 1996, with the merger of Huron Services for Youth and Child & Family Services.

It remains the county's largest human services agency but had already cut its staff from 400 to 122, seen its client base fall from 5,000 to 600 and watched its budget drop from a high of \$11 million to

\$4.9 million.

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Welfare demand swells

Friday, May 25, 2007

By Christina Hildreth

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The statistics tell the story: one of unemployment, last resorts and an increasing reliance on welfare.

The number of Jackson County residents on public assistance increased by 32 percent from 897 in April 2006 to 1,183 last month. The number of food stamp recipients increased by 13 percent, from 7,683 to 8,663, during the same time period.

The Jackson County Department of Human Services office is now processing more than 25,000 cash assistance requests every month, or about 830 every day.

So many people seek help that administrators had a wall knocked down to double the size of the lobby at the local DHS office.

On normal mornings, staff had to squeeze through a standing-room only crowd to get to the bathroom, said DHS program manger Debra Cole.

Department statistics aren't broken down by gender, but Cole said staff is seeing more men coming into the office, many with the "deer-in-the-headlights" look of a first-time applicant.

Seventy-nine percent of the people collecting welfare last month in Jackson had no earned income.

"It is a direct correlation to the downturn in the economy," she said.

Unemployment in Jackson County stood at 7.5 percent in April, up from 6.6 percent a year ago, according to the state Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

Things weren't so bad before the economy tanked. Since 2001, distribution of food stamps and medical assistance have risen 115 percent and 38 percent, respectively.

The increase is pushing the department's 59 employees hard. Many work through lunch, forgo breaks and work during free time to process cases. A few years ago, a caseworker in Jackson County typically handled 300 to 400 cases. Now some handle 600.

The crunch could get even worse. On Tuesday, the state notified its union, United Auto Workers, that it may impose up to 20 mandatory layoff days in the next month.

The state of Michigan ran out of money to make emergency relief payments last month, forcing applicants seeking help with monthly bills to turn to nonprofits. In April 2007, the Salvation Army handled 300 more emergency assistance cases than in April 2006, almost doubling its caseload.

"We have two caseworkers here, and for a couple weeks we both were doing nothing but consumer bills," said Virginia Fetterman, director of social services at the Salvation Army.

During those busy weeks, another employee did nothing but send out food baskets.

Fetterman said her agency had seen the same story as DHS: more men, more first-timers and an ever-

increasing demand for services. Reports from Central Michigan 211, a centralized human services help line, show more men calling for assistance this year over last year.

While others in Michigan are struggling, the numbers from the Jackson DHS office are sometimes higher than other bigger, more populated counties across the state.

"Jackson County seems to be very hard-hit," Cole said.

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Civil Service Dropped Into DMB

MIRS, May 24, 2007

Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** scratched off another state department today, folding the Department of Civil Service (DCS) into the Department of Management and Budget (DMB) as part of a series of organizational changes that also lassoed in human resource operations from all 18 state departments into one corral.

The governor is also bringing all internal auditing functions and all accounting functions under one roof within DMB. Five obscure committees were also eliminated as part of today's move.

No individual position would be directly eliminated under the eight government-cutting executive orders signed today, but Granholm Press Secretary Liz **BOYD** said some personnel savings would be made over time, through attrition and possibly otherwise.

The big move today, however, was getting rid of the Department of Civil Service, making it the second state department eliminated under Granholm's tenure. The governor folded the Department of Career Development into the new Department of Labor and Economic Growth early in her tenure.

Under the move, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) would remain as an autonomous body under DMB and would still be charged with appointing and employing the state personnel director. The State Officer's Compensation Commission and Board of Ethics also get moved to DMB.

All human resources operations for the state would fall under the CSC. Department directors would continue to be the appointing authority and would participate in the recruitment of employees. Department directors would still be charged with processing employee grievances, conducting training seminars, promote employees and abolish positions.

Other human resource function support, administration and implementation would be done by the Commission's MI HR Service Center.

Reporters pressed Boyd on exactly how much money the consolidation would save the state. She said she didn't have an exact figure, but that such efficiency moves would obviously result in cost-savings.

"This is part of the Governor's continued effort to streamline state government," Boyd told reporters. "We're consolidating and reducing the size of state government. Over just the past three months, the Governor has saved the state \$21 million through her executive orders. This is a continuation of that process."

The special committees eliminated under today's move included the Environmental Education Advisory Committee, the Great Lakes Protection Fund Technical Advisory Board, the Organic Advisory Council, the Consumer Food Safety Education Fund Advisory Committee and the Task Force on Cervical Cancer.

Rep. Phil **LaJOY** (R-Canton), who sponsored a human resource consolidation bill the last three terms, said today's move was something that "has been needed for a long time." As someone who

said he has "spent his life doing this kind of thing," LaJoy said he's glad the Governor is taking action on ways the state can be more efficient.

"Hopefully, this is a taste of more of what we can expect," LaJoy said. "The fact that she has taken my idea and run with it gives me satisfaction, I guess. The important thing here is that we're doing the right thing here."

Granholtz vetoed LaJoy's human resource consolidation bill, HB 5190 of 2004, saying at the time it was redundant since her administration already was working on this concept (See "[HR Consolidation Vetoed](#)," 4/8/04).

LaJoy also made a pitch for his new bill, [HB 4542](#), which recruits the "best and brightest" people in the state to look at ways to make state government run more efficiently.

But Boyd said today that Granholtz's objection to LaJoy's measures were because she was already in the process of doing something similar, and in fact had already started heading down that road.

"We were already doing this," Boyd said. "Representative LaJoy was just piggy-backing on what we had already started."



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Published May 25, 2007

Credit union offers low-interest loans if workers laid off

Derek Wallbank
Lansing State Journal

Union officials representing state workers say they're still hopeful their members won't be laid off as part of an effort to balance the state budget.

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But if layoffs do occur, several groups say they'll be ready to help workers cope with lost pay.

NuUnion Credit Union (formerly State Employees Credit Union) will introduce a special low-interest loan today for workers facing temporary layoffs.

NuUnion counts more than 14,500 state employees among its members.

The 48-month loan would be good for up to \$7,500 at a fixed 4.9 percent interest rate. Members will be able to defer payments for 60 days if needed.

The credit union also allows members in good standing two month-long loan payment extensions per year.

"A loss of income is a loss of income," said NuUnion spokeswoman Danielle Brehmer. "Whether they plan to spend or save, people count on that money."

Workers are bracing for potential layoffs after a letter was sent to unions Tuesday advising that the state may lay off union employees on or after June 22.

There are 14,300 state employees working in the tri-county area.

Most union contracts provide for temporary layoffs of up to 19 days, or almost four weeks' pay.

There also are provisions for indefinite layoffs.

Most forms of assistance, both state and charitable, are designed to help those in crisis.

For example, mortgage assistance goes first to those who have received foreclosure notices, said Capital Area United Way spokeswoman Suzanne Eman-Jachnig.

Officials from three state unions said they are focusing efforts on pressuring legislators and the governor to come to an agreement on the current year's budget that doesn't involve layoffs.

"At this point we're trying to deal with legislators," said Ed McNeil, spokesman for the state chapter of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which represents 2,700 state employees.

"I still think it's preventable," agreed John DeTizio, labor relations director for the Michigan Association of Government Employees.

DeTizio said that if layoffs do occur, his union will help members as much as it can, but declined to provide details.

Contact Derek Wallbank at 267-1301 or dwallbank @lsj.com.

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Supreme Court will decide whether gay couples get health benefits

5/24/2007, 10:35 a.m. ET

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — The Michigan Supreme Court has agreed to hear an appeal of a ruling that blocks public universities and state and local governments from providing health insurance benefits to the partners of gay workers.

The high court released an order Thursday granting a motion for appeal filed by 21 gay couples represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan. The court denied their request to stay, or halt, the state Court of Appeals' decision.

The appeals court gave its ruling immediate effect, though many public employers have said they won't take away domestic partner benefits until the case is decided once and for all.

The appeals court in February cited Michigan's 2004 voter-approved constitutional amendment against gay marriage — which makes the union between a man and woman the only agreement recognized as a marriage "or similar union for any purpose" — as also barring domestic partner benefits for the same-sex partners of public employees.

Sixteen of the plaintiffs work for employers who offer same-sex benefits — the city of Kalamazoo, various universities and a county health department covering the Lansing area. Another five plaintiffs are employed by the state, which in 2004 agreed to provide same-sex benefits but delayed them until courts ruled on their legality.

The appeals court ruling reversed a 2005 decision by an Ingham County judge who allowed public employers to provide the benefits.

The same-sex benefits case is National Pride at Work v. Gov. of Michigan.

On the Net:

Michigan Supreme Court: <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt>

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